INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

Pol 27 Arab-Isr
XR Dec 12 25

8-1 Action
NEA
Info
SS
GPM
SP
SC
SAH
L
H
EUR
IO
P
MSIA
NSC
INR
CIA
NSA
ACDA
GDP
TRSY
RSR
RSC

147

CONFIDENTIAL

DEPARTMENT OF STATE - A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY: 1967 JUN 16 PM 5 22
RDS or XDS EXT. DATE
1. AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS
DECLASSIFIED/RELEASABLE
RELEASE DENIED
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

0142 18

VZCZCLD807
RR RUEHC RUEKDA RUQMVL
DE RUDTCR 556 1671930
ZNY CCCCC
R 161815Z JUN 67
FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO RUQMVL/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
RUDLKD/CINCUSNAVEUR
RUFHRO/USDOCOSOUTH
RUFPBK/USCINCEUR
RUEKDA/OSD
STATE GRNC
BT

CONFIDENTIAL VALLETTA 556

USDOCOSOUTH FOR FRESHMAN

SUBJECT: USS LIBERTY

DECLASSIFICATION DATE 5/7/76
PER Surg OFFICE NEA
FADRC FOI CASE NO. 20037

1. LIBERTY REACHED MALTA 0630 JUNE 14 UNDER OWN POWER. TO MINIMIZE IMMEDIATE SCRUTINY IN VIEW PUBLIC INTEREST SHIP INITIALLY BERTHED ROYAL NAVAL BASE WHILE DIVERS EXAMINED UNDERWATER DAMAGE. SHIP MOVED TO DRYDOCK 1450 AND PUMPED DRY BY 1915. SEARCH FOR AND RECOVERY OF MISSING BODIES BEGAN IMMEDIATELY. MEDICAL TEAM REMOVED AND TENTATIVELY IDENTIFIED BODIES ON SPOT AND BAGGED THEM FOR IMMEDIATE SHIPMENT NAPLES. WORK COMPLETE ABOUT 0300 JUNE 15 WITH TOTAL TWENTY

PAGE 2 RUDTCR 556 C O N F I D E N T I A L
BODIES DISCOVERED. FIVE MISSING AND PRESUMED LOST AT SEA. MISCELLANEOUS AS YET UNIDENTIFIABLE REMAINS MAY ELIMINATE DOUBTS. MASSIVE CLEANUP AND REPAIR WORK NOW UNDERWAY. LOWER RESEARCH COMPARTMENTS HAVE EQUIPMENT MIXED WITH MASS OF TWISTED WRECKAGE MAKING RECOVERY CLASSIFIED MATTER SLOW PROCESS. REMOTE POSSIBILITY FINAL CLEARANCE OF DEBRIS MAY UNCOVER ADDITIONAL HUMAN REMAINS. MAJOR DAMAGE TO SHIP IS (1) 24 BY 39 FOOT TEARDROP HOLE IN STARBOARD SIDE FROM TORPEDO EXPLOSION (2) 821 SHELL AND FRAGMENT HOLES IN HULL OF WHICH ABOUT 250 CAUSED BY AIRCRAFT CANNON. REPAIR TIME ESTIMATED THREE WEEKS.

2. COMMENT: GOM INITIAL REACTION LIBERTY RESTRAINED. GOM GRANTED DIPLOMATIC CLEARANCE THROUGH NORMAL CHANNELS WHILE DOCKYARD AND NAVY MADE OWN DIRECT ARRANGEMENTS. EMBASSY REQUESTED GOM MINIMIZE PUBLICITY FOR SAKE FAMILIES OF DEAD AND

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

REVIEW JUNE 1987

WOUNDED. NO MENTION SECURITY ASPECT. AT EMBASSY'S REQUEST GOM ALLOWED WHOLE MATTER OF SEARCH, RECOVERY AND REMOVAL OF BODIES AND EQUIPMENT TO BE HANDLED AS INTRA-NAVY AFFAIR.

3. TWO NAVY PAO'S HANDLED NEWSMEN. LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL

PAGE 3 RUDICR 556 C O N F I D E N T I A L

PRESS INTEREST STRONG. PRESS COOPERATIVE AND FACTUAL. ONLY ATTEMPT DISTORTION WAS ON PART PAUL CARACHI (MLP) FORMER EDITOR MALTA NEWS. CARACHI CALLED ME TO SUGGEST ONLY REASON LIBERTY IN MALTA WAS NO OTHER COUNTRY WOULD HAVE HER. I STRONGLY DENIED STATEMENT AND ASSERTED SHIP CAME AT US GOVERNMENT REQUEST ON ACCOUNT CAPABILITY DRYDOCKS AND FACT GOOD BUSINESS FOR MALTA. PAPER CARRIED MY STATEMENT JUNE 15.

4. NBC, CBS AND AP REPORTERS AND CAMERAMEN HERE FOR ARRIVAL. INITIAL PHOTOGRAPHS ALLOWED ONLY FROM DISTANCE UNTIL VESSEL DRYDOCKED AND CLEARED OF BODIES. TO PREVENT LENDING CREDENCE TO HORTON (AP) "SPY SHIP" STORY, NAVY PAO ARRANGED TOUR OF SHIP JUNE 15. NEWSMEN ALLOWED SEE DAMAGED AREAS AND PHOTOGRAPH FREELY. RESTRICTION ON INTERVIEWS SINCE COURT OF INQUIRY IN-SESSION. FORTUNATELY VISIT PERMITTED BEFORE NEWSWEEK "PERISCOPE" STORY ON LIBERTY SPY-MISSION REACHED MALTA. SO FAR ONLY MALTA NEWS HAS PICKED UP AND PUBLISHED UNDER HEADLINE "ATTACK ON LIBERTY WAS NO MISTAKE". HOWEVER, NO INQUIRIES RECEIVED HERE ABOUT LIBERTY'S MISSION.
FELDMAN
BT